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WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

BATTALION CHIEF BRIAN O'FLAHERTY

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Transcribed by Laurie A. Collins

CHIEF LAKIOTES: Today's date is January 9th, 2002. The time is approximately 1140 hours. My name is Battalion Chief Art Lakiotes, New York City Fire Department, Safety Command. I'm here interviewing Battalion Chief Brian O'Flaherty of the Safety Operating Battalion regarding the events that occurred on September 11th, 2001.

Q. Brian, if you would, just start us off I guess when you got the note, when you saw the towers and then as the events unfolded for you that day.

A. I was in quarters. I had gone in the conference room, and I was typing up an interview from the Astoria Boulevard fire, and one of the guys from the marine unit, Eddie Mauro, came in the room and said, "Chief, you have to see the fire in the World Trade Center." I said, "Now?" He said, "Yeah, right now. You've go to see it. It's unbelievable."

We left the room, walked into the kitchen. As you walk in the marine division kitchen, you look out the window over the East

River and you could see real heavy smoke pushing out of the north tower upper portion of the building, heavy smoke. I didn't see any fire; heavy smoke.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

At one point I guess Mike gave me the binoculars. I looked through. You could see them coming out. You could only see two sides of the building. Just around that time, I handed the binoculars back after seeing a few people jump, and I heard the dispatcher calling the 1st Division and telling them they had reports that people had jumped from the building or were jumping from the building. But it was a casual report.

I wanted to get to the phone to just tell the Manhattan dispatcher to tell the division that -- I asked Mike -- we had seen, I figured, a couple dozen people, two or three

dozen people. We only saw two sides of the building. I wanted to tell the dispatcher, let the division know, this wasn't just one or two people jumping; this was a real problem. They could land on your head and kill somebody coming out from a hundred stories up.

I just dialed the Manhattan dispatcher. The noise in the kitchen area was too much to hear, so I just stepped through the weight room, closed the door. I identified myself and started to tell them about how many jumpers, let the division know.

Just then out of the corner of my eye, I could see this plane. I just remember the dark. It was in the shadow. It looked low. I thought, "What the heck is the guy doing?" I watched it, watched him turn and crash right into the south tower. Right away I knew it was terrorism or terrorists. I didn't know what the first one was, but I knew what the second one was.

I had the dispatcher on the phone. I said, "Stop talking about the jumpers. We just had a plane go into the south tower, another

plane." He said he saw it, I assume on television. We both hung up the phone. That was the end of the conversation.

I came back out from the weight room into the kitchen, hung up the phone. Now it was noisy. These guys had all seen it. The television was on at that time. Maybe they were starting to play replays. I think shortly after they played one replay. Everybody knew it was terrorism.

Just then Larry had walked into the kitchen, Larry Stack, and said, "Wow, these guys have their hands full. What do you think, boys? Should we go give them a hand?" We just talked about that. Everybody said yeah. We turned around. It was Brian Meyers, Mike Telesca, Larry Stack and myself, and everybody decided get dressed, get ready.

I remember Larry telling Brian to get the car ready, put turnout gear in it, hand lights, any radios, whatever we could find. Battalion had already responded. We were right there. Mike was going to work on I think the Gorumba case. He had held Meyers to work over

with Telesca. Larry and I were going to work on Astoria Boulevard.

So we got everything together, and we decided -- we grabbed some notepads. We grabbed a bunch of boxes of gloves, the blue ones for blood-borne pathogens. We grabbed gloves, went downstairs. Brian had asked what car to take. I said, "Let's take the red and white." We had the two cars, the red and white or the blue. I said, "because at least it's got the lights on the roof."

We went downstairs, and Brian had all the stuff in the car. We left the Navy Yard and started heading over. We only had one radio. We had one radio, maybe three hand lights. That's all the stuff we could find. I remember in the car ride over Larry kept saying, "We only have the one radio. Everybody stick together until we find a command post, tell them what's going on."

We came out of the Navy Yard, down Flushing. We weren't sure what bridge, but as we look we could see the Manhattan Bridge. There was no traffic on it. So we said we'll take the Manhattan Bridge. We went over the Manhattan.

From the top of the bridge, you had a pretty good view of both the buildings, heavy smoke coming out. The south tower you could see fire and smoke. The north tower was still just sort of heavy smoke.

We cut down by Police Plaza, by City Hall and around the end of City Hall Park. We went west and got to Church Street. Now the traffic was getting bad, because now there was a lot of people walking from the scene. We saw a lot of vehicles to the left, so we went south on Church. We stopped just around the post office before you get to Vesey. It was all blocked up.

I got out of the car, and I told Larry I saw an FBI agent and I was going to start talking to him. I gave him my card, and he gave me a card. I said I thought that that second plane that went into the south tower was a military plane, like a transport or small cargo military.

The reason I thought that, I found out later, the sun never shined off it. It was a dark-color plane. It ended up, I found out later, it was why. It was United Airlines. They

paint their planes a dull gray and blue. I didn't see any shine off the plane when it went from dark to sun.

I just gave him cards. I left, turned around and said, "Where the heck did they go?" I couldn't see the car. I realized they had crossed over Vesey, and the car was right over there. There was a subway entrance on the west side of the street right by the cemetery.

Q. Church?

A. Yeah. The car was right up there, right by the entrance to the subway. Brian might have even have jumped part of the curb. They were getting the stuff out of the trunk. We were all getting dressed, putting our turnout gear on, full turnout, bunker gear, helmets, a couple lights, the pads and stuff. Larry again said, "We've got to stay together until we get to the command post."

I looked up, and there was debris coming down, papers, I know, papers all over the air. We looked at each other, the command post, where is it going to be? It's going to be on West Street, someplace around the area where it



was during the bombing.

How are we going to get down? We knew people were coming out of the north tower. There was all this debris. I looked across the street, and I knew we could go down like you go into the subway, right down to the concourse. So we did. We went in off Church, in the door, down one flight of stairs to the concourse level. I just know how to go from working in rescue and working the 1st Division when I was in the union.

We cut across the concourse. The lights were on. I remember the lights in the stores were still on in the concourse. Not all the lights, not all the lights in the hallway, but the lights in some of the stores were still on. I saw that.

I started cutting across. Just about the time you could see -- now you get to the area where all the escalators come up from the PATH line. That's on our right. Now it's dark. There were no more lights in the hallways.

Just before you get there, I looked to the left. There's a hallway where there's an entrance to go to the south tower. I could look

to the south. You could see figures of people, firemen or helmets, in the south tower. It's the lobby of the south tower. It's too far to see anybody.

Just from passing where the PATH escalators come up on the right, there was an engine company. It's a Brooklyn company. I just remember three numbers. They came up and said, "Chief, how do you get to the south tower?" I said, "Go up a ways. You'll see a sign to the right. Just make a right. You'll go to the south tower."

Just after we passed them, we walked up, and the sprinklers are going off. You could see the sprinklers going off. I think it was Larry that said, "That's a good sign." Of course now we know that wasn't. That was the water draining out of the system. The sprinklers were going off in that concourse level. In the area of the south tower, all the sprinklers were going off.

We cut in. When you go into the lobby at that area, that's not the lobby of the building; that's like that street-level lobby.

The command post level lobby is higher. That's in the north tower.

I don't know, I was just looking a little bit. Larry said it before I saw it. He said, "Holy shit." All of those fixed windows in the lobby were blown out. They were gone. He said it, and I was looking at it. He said, "We can't go out there." I don't remember why -- I knew why.

Q. The lobby of the hotel there?

A. No, the lobby of tower one, the north tower. We walked in the lobby. The long, fixed windows are blown out.

As soon as Larry says it -- I'm looking at the windows, and Larry says, "We can't go out there." I knew in my mind why, the debris coming down or people coming down. As soon as he said it, there was no doubt.

I quick looked to my left, because I know from '93 in that other incident, the bombing -- I looked to my left, and I could see there's four doors out of the south end of the lobby that go into the hotel. They're not really greatly marked, but you go through those doors.

I said, "We'll go this way." I said something about the hotel. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

When we first go through those doors, it's dark in there. There's no lights, and the hallway is dark. We're walking through. As we're going through, you could see light at the other end. I'm walking through, and I could see these concrete columns, big concrete columns, three feet, maybe even larger than that, maybe up to four feet in diameter. I just made note of it.

Then as you come out of that, there's a circular area. It's like a rotunda. I remember the ceiling was higher there. The columns were all around that, all around the walls. Again, I said they weren't there in '93, those towers. I just said in the back of my mind they must have put those things in when they rebuilt this place, because that's about the area where the bomb went off.

At the end where those columns were and then -- the columns ended, and just before you

walked into the lobby -- we were looking toward the lobby, and I could see the glass windows, see the high ceiling of the lobby.

I could see a bunch of people, Fire Department chief -- I could see back of the coat "Deputy Chief Galvin," so I know it's Tommy Galvin from the 3rd Division. His back is to us. The rest of the people are facing us.

I don't know if I say something to Larry or just point to him. In my mind the intention was to go over and see Galvin and find out where the command post was, exactly where the command post was.

As we were walking towards him, about, I'd say, six to eight feet from Galvin, and a lot of guys are looking at him, but the one guy, Freddie Scheffold from the 12th Battalion, he looked at me, I looked at him. You know how you make eye contact with somebody and you acknowledge each other, it's just that nod, I know he sees me, at that exact moment I can feel -- or hear the noise first. I hear a noise. Right after that noise, you could feel the building start to shudder, tremble, under your

feet.

Somebody said to me, "What's going on?" I said, "What's going on? The fucking building -- the goddamn building is coming down." I actually said, "The fucking building is coming down. This goddamn building is coming down." I knew what was coming down. The building I was in was coming down.

I looked real quick forward. I didn't like that option because it was a big, high lobby, a lot of glass. I figured it was not that well supported. I remember seeing those columns. Whoever was next to me -- I thought it was Telesca, but it ended up being Myers, Brian Myers. He said, "Where are we going?" I turned and said, "We're going back to those columns."

I remember taking a few steps and trying to run, and you're either thrown or blown off your feet. I remember I ended up my face was right up against the wall, a column was right near my left shoulder, a big column. That's it.

It was a terrible noise. Besides the building shuddering, the sound was horrendous. To me it sounded like steel cutting through

steel. That's how I explain it. You're laying there. There's stuff hitting you. I had my right hand up behind my head and neck, and I just said let it be merciful, because you think it's all over. There's stuff hitting you but nothing -- the stuff is debris flying around.

Q. Nothing --

A. Nothing hits you. The next thing you --

Q. Somebody compared it to as pelting you.

A. Yeah, but it wasn't heavy.

Q. No.

A. It was like stone, stuff hitting you and everything. I thought it was ceiling tiles, the suspended ceiling and shit like that.

All of a sudden the noise stops.

There's no more shaking. Later after a couple seconds, you listen. My hearing is not great, but I think it's pretty acute at this point. I'm really listening. I don't hear anything else going on, it's all right.

I was just ready to say something or try to get up. Actually I think I tried to push myself up a little bit, and right away I know my

left shoulder, my arm, is hurting. I laid there for a couple seconds. Then I hear somebody cough behind me.

As soon as I hear somebody cough, I yell, "Who is that?" Again, I always think it's Telesca, but it's not; it's Myers. I said, "Who's that?" He recognizes my voice. "Chief, where are you?" I could hear his voice. I know he's behind me.

I have my hand light, the chief's hand light. I knew it was on. I could see it was on. I put it up over my head. It was dusty. I started moving the light. "Can you see the light?" He said, "No, I don't see the light." "What the hell's going on?" I couldn't figure if it was debris or just the dust.

I said, "I'll keep moving the light." I do it a few more times. He said, "Oh, I see you now. I'll be right there." In a real short time, he's next to me. I said, "You've got to help me get up," because I couldn't push myself up. I tried to push myself up. I wouldn't put pressure on my shoulder. He helps me up to my knees.



As soon as I get to my knees, I realize my helmet's missing. I said, "Do me a favor. My helmet's got to be right here. Just find my helmet. My glasses are gone." He said, "I don't have a light." I hand him the light. I just stayed there kneeling, feeling around a little bit. He wasn't gone long. When he was back, he gave me my helmet. I said "Thanks," because I was afraid something now was going fall and hit me in the head and kill me.

He gets me up to my feet. He said, "What the hell happened?" We turn around, and maybe, again, six, eight feet behind from where we left -- I don't think we traveled -- it was floor to ceiling debris. It was just solid, from as high up as I can look, which is pretty high at this point. It's floor to ceiling debris. I'm looking at that.

I think Brian hears it first, these voices, before I do. I was looking at the debris and looking around at the light. He gave me the light back. I think he yells, and I don't know if it was Telesca or Larry -- no, I think Larry answered. We start to move towards him.

I could hear some guy yelling, "Mayday, mayday," on the radio, handy talky, "There's been a collapse. We're trapped." I looked. It was Eddie Henry from the 40 Battalion. I recognized him. He was yelling.

We get to Larry. By the time we get to Larry, the next thing I know, all four of us are there: Larry's there, Mike Telesca, Brian and myself.

I think Larry said something about -- because nobody was answering Henry. He said something like "Nobody's answering. You should knock it off." I said, "Larry, let him yell. Maybe somebody will hear him. Nobody knows we're here."

Larry turned one way, I turned another, and there was a lieutenant there. There was a whole bunch of debris. I remember him saying, "Hey, Chief, Chief, there's a guy trapped in here." He disappears through a small hole in the debris. I tried to follow him. As soon as I tried to follow him, that stuff hit my left shoulder. It was like, whew, stop, don't attempt that again.

I back up, and Larry is coming again. Larry said, "What's up?" I said, "Larry, this guy says he's got a guy in here trapped." I told the guy, I said, "I can't get through there." I turned around and I said, "Just keep talking to the guy. Find out his name," you know, all that stuff.

I turn around, and Larry is behind me. He said, "What's going on?" I said, "There's a guy in there trapped." I said, "I tried to get through. I can't. I hurt my arm, and I can't get through." He said, "All right. Let me go."

I said, "If you're going through there, we trade lights." I remember he had the fireman's light. He had a hand light. I had the big chief light. I said, "Here, take that light. You go through there. I'm going to go" -- as soon as I said "Go," he said, "Whoa, whoa, we've got to stay together." I said, "Larry, we're still fucking trapped in this building." I said, "You try to get the guy out. I'm going to go back the way we came in and see if we can get a way out." I said, "But I'll come back to you. If you find the guy, come to me. That's what

we'll do."

I leave. It's collapsing. When I get away from this area in this hallway again, it's like a lean-to. But just before I get to the hallway, I find a door. I open the door. It's a storage room. I quick look in. There's no outlets.

I remember feeling cold air. I thought in the back of my mind "Close the door." If you stay to the left, you can bend over and walk up this hallway. Down to the right where it's like a lean-to, you have to crawl. I stayed along the wall. I go along.

All of a sudden there's this guy yelling, and there's a door open and it's a civilian. I asked who he is, and he says something about hotel security. He said, "I've got a door. I think it's an exit." I said, "Where does it go?" He said, "Down." I said, "Down where?" He said, "Well, I think you have to go down one or two flights."

I said, "Whoa, we're not going down anyplace." He said, "Give me a light." I said, "Nice fucking try. You're not getting my light

either." I said, "Stay here. We're not going changing levels. We have other people at this level. We're going to leave together."

Then I continue up. I go up and find where we came in, but the rolled-up gates come down and they're solid, metal. I have no radio. So I take the hand light, and I bang on the door. I bang on the gate. I wait, hoping somebody will answer.

A little while, nothing. I banged some more. I did that like three or four times. I realized there's nobody answering on the other side, and I can't keep staying here. I don't have the radio. I don't remember who had the radio. I think Larry had it. I'm not sure. I had no radio. You can't hear anything.

After three or four times banging, I said this is no good. I start to turn back to go back towards where Larry and everybody was. But as I go back, I noticed a door on my right I didn't see on the way out, because I was focused on those gates.

I opened that door up. It might have said exit on it -- I'm not sure -- or a light. I

opened the door. Ten feet in, there's another door. I quick open that one, go to the next one, and there's a third door. I said "Oops, this is no good." Too many doors. I go back.

Just as I go back, there's a civilian, and I don't know if it's the same guy I met the first time or not. Again, civilian clothes. I said, "You stay by this first door. You keep the door open. I'm going through the second door. There's another door. If I start yelling, you just yell." I didn't know if I was going through a maze or not -- "You just yell."

As soon as I opened the third door, there's a hole in the wall. I could see out onto West Street. This is a block wall, and the hole is about, I've got to say, four and a half to five feet off the ground. But you could see out. All you could see is the dust and debris at that point. I don't see anybody out there.

There's a door to the right. I opened that door. Then I could see a door that says exit, another door. I said screw this. I run back. Okay, I have a hole the wall. I have a door marked "exit." I run back. I start moving

back. There are civilians there. I start yelling, "We have an exit here." I tell them, "You keep yelling."

Just then Ed Henry comes. He's the first guy that gets there. So he goes back with me. I tell the guy, "Keep yelling." The guy starts yelling, "Come this way. We have a way out. We have a way out."

I went back with Ed Henry. He gets to the opening in the wall. I remember he yells a couple of maydays on the radio. Again, he's frustrated because he's yelling and there's nobody answering.

I said, "Ed, there's a door there." We open that door. He goes down. He leaves me. He goes down, and I watch him. He pushes and opens eight inches or so and it won't move anymore. I said, "Shoot." I said, "There is still nobody there." I said, "I can't really help too much." I turned around and said I would put my back against the door, you push. It opens to maybe 12 inches, but it stops like dead. That's not going to work.

We go back. He's still yelling the

mayday. I said, "Ed, use the hand light. Use the light." He's shaking it back and forth. In a few minutes he comes -- again, he's frustrated. Now more people are -- no, they're not there yet. I can hear the guy yelling. I can hear people coming.

Ed Henry gets a chair, and he climbs on this chair. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to go over the wall and see if I can get the door open." He's climbing up already.

I thought, "Oh, shit, he's got no helmet on." I said, "If you're going over the wall" -- and I give him my helmet. I'm afraid if he goes over the wall and something hits him in the fucking head he won't be able to open the door for us.

He no sooner goes over the door and disappears. He goes to the right. I can't see him anymore. I said to myself, "That wasn't smart, giving up your helmet." I knew why I did it.

The next thing I know, Larry's there. These two officers -- oh, Brian Myers is there.



I thought Mike was there, but he wasn't [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I don't know what happened, but he wasn't there. I know now. But he wasn't with us. And the two guys.

The one guy said, "Who are you?" I said something about the guy that was trapped. Larry said, "Yeah. This is the guy. We have him." I said, "Where are you from? A company?" He said, "No. We're from rescue school. We shouldn't be here." I know I had a feeling we weren't supposed to be here either, because nobody knows we're here.

And there were a couple civilians. I think maybe in general between Ed Henry, his aide, Brian, I figured there was about ten people there at most. That's all that came from the area that survived.

I turn around, and I could see somebody with a white helmet walking, which to me looks like he's walking towards us. I keep watching. He's getting closer. I don't have my glasses. My glasses are gone. He's not too far away, and I realize it's Ray Downey.

Larry had talked to one of the

civilians, and the guy had some kind of problem. I didn't know if he was hurt. I didn't know if he had a heart condition. I remember Larry saying this guy said he can't -- we're going to go out, if we have to go over the wall. This guy said something about he couldn't, he needed help.

Just then Ray came. I was talking to him. We were talking through the hole in the wall. He said, "You're not going to believe what happened. This guy has got to get out of here." Larry comes over. Larry's talking to him. I backed up a little bit. I think Larry or Ed, one of them, said, "Let's go. We've got to start getting out of here."

I turned first and said, "Larry, I'll stay here, because I'm going to have trouble." He said, "Knock it off. You're the first guy we're getting out of here because you can't take care of yourself."

We go over there, and I think he wants to lift me up. I see the chair there that Henry had pushed over to the side. I said, "Grab the chair and put it to the back, turn it backwards." I stood on the chair backwards, maybe stood on

the back of the chair, and then Brian Myers and Larry boosted me up on the wall. I swung my legs around.

Ray is there and he wanted to grab me. I said, "No." I just put my right arm to his right shoulder, he put his arm up, and I slid down the wall. He kept saying to me, "Just walk away from the building as fast as you can and head towards Feehan and Ganci. Can you see them?" He pointed to them. I could see just two white helmets way across West Street, almost by the curb. I could see them.

I started to maneuver around. The sidewalk wasn't too bad with debris. There were a couple rigs there. I remember seeing 10 Truck. That's where the sidewalk comes in and curves in. That rig was partially turned in like that. I remember seeing the rig there.

I saw 10 on the ladder. I saw 10 Truck on the ladder. I walked behind that in front of a pumper. I decided to walk across West Street. There's all that dust like a moonscape. As you walk, every once in a while -- on dust, I didn't realize it then but what you're doing is the dust

is covering that stainless steel. When you have stainless steel and dust, it's like a shuffleboard. When I got that quick movement, my arm would go, "Oh, don't do that fucking move anymore, stupid."

I'm moving across that. I'm trying to pick my way. It was pretty slow in the beginning. I see somebody with a black helmet coming from my right. I just tried to keep moving. I'm focused on those two white helmets. I keep going. I get across the street.

About a third of the way over, the guy with the black helmet comes. I don't realize who it was. I know now it was Al Fuentes, because we talked about it. I never realized. I guess I was so focused on getting to Ganci and Feehan.

He helps me about two-thirds of the way. After about two-thirds of the way across West Street, most of that debris stops. It's easier to maneuver. He leaves me.

I get to Ganci and Feehan. "Just tell them how many people there are. Who's there? Where were you? How many people survived?" I said there was about 10, maybe 11 people where we

are. "Anybody buried?" I said there were two guys that we found. One guy was buried. One kid had dug himself out, one lieutenant, and the other guy, they went back with Larry and got out. I said that's the only two they said they heard, because they said there's nobody else they heard. All I saw was debris from floor to ceiling. We were just trapped in this little corner of the building I'll show you on the diagram later.

Okay. Ganci turns around and says to me, "Can you move on your own or do you need help?" I said, "No." He had his hands full. I said, "I'll move on my own." Just as I'm leaving, he said, "Where's Ray? Where are you guys?" I turn around, look back at the hotel. Again, you can't see -- I don't see clear without my glasses, but it's still dusty. I could see Ray's helmet. I could see the white helmet.

I said, "You see the helmet?" He said, "Where? Where?" I see it. It's right where the building bends almost in the hotel. I said, "Right there. That's Ray. Okay. Larry and them are on the inside of that wall." All right, he knows where they are now. He said, "You take

off."

I think it was around then I opened my coat up and I stick my hand into the coat, close the coat up. I'm looking at debris. It's better to stay up on the sidewalk, on the sidewalk across the street, move along. Then at the point where the roadway moves in, it goes under where the bridge goes across.

At that point it clears up a little bit, and I move more to the right onto the street, off the sidewalk, move into the street. I get under the roadway --

Q. The pedestrian bridge?

A. The pedestrian bridge. I wanted to stop, because, one, I knew I was protected from debris coming down. But something in the back of my mind said, "Don't fucking stop because you're not going to stop moving." So I didn't stop.

I walked a little bit further. If I had to guess, it would have been a tower ladder I saw. I saw Rescue 1's rig on my right. I remember seeing it. It wasn't really damaged, nothing from the first collapse. It had a lot of dust all over it. I saw it there. Nobody by the

rig.

Just passing that, I'm walking. I think there's a tower ladder to my right. I saw a guy walking. It's Joe Angelini from Rescue 1. I do a double-take, because he didn't have a Rescue 1 helmet on. He had bunker gear and everything else on.

I said, "Joe, did you see Rescue 1?" He said, "No, I'm trying to find it." I didn't realize he had been on light duty and came from SOC over at the TAC unit. I said, "How much further is Vesey Street?" because that's what Pete told me. Pete said, "Get to Vesey Street, and there's ambulances there. I said, all right, that's where I'm trying to get to.

Joey said, "You will see the collapse units parked up there." It wasn't that much further. I remember seeing Rescue's 3 collapse rig. I remember seeing the Volvo on the front. The Volvo cab was facing West. That was the rig -- I walked in front of it.

I went up there, looked around, and I saw no ambulances. I saw a lot of people around. I remember seeing somebody in a white helmet. I

don't think it was one of ours. It could have been EMS, just because I don't recognize who it was.

I remember asking the question, "Where are the ambulances?" Somebody said, "Oh, two or three more blocks." My famous quote is "You've got to be fucking kidding me" at this point because I made it this far and two or three more blocks at this point doesn't seem like an option.

Somebody off to my left, I don't know if he touched me on the shoulder or I heard his voice. I turned a little bit to my left. He said, "Chief, you don't have to go there. Just go west. Go west." He's pointing. "Go west on Vesey. There's a triage area up there much closer."

I start walking west. I don't think I get more than 100 feet up past the curb line heading west on that street, and the first thing I hear is this roar and people screaming. I have a chance to look over my left shoulder.

As I'm looking over my left shoulder, I see a shadow coming towards me. I thought it was another plane. I didn't think the building was



coming down. I thought it was another plane. I couldn't believe it.

I tried to run. I couldn't run. I moved as fast as I could. I knew there were people running past me; I could feel it. The next thing, you're again blown, thrown off your feet.

At this point now I'm trying to protect my left arm. I'm using my right arm to protect it. It's in the coat. I drove both my knees into the ground. I'm still not putting my hand out, and I smacked my face right into the ground. I bounced off the ground. Oh, shit. Look up. Just before it turns pitch-black, all I can remember seeing was blood all over the ground, laying there. The next thing it goes pitch-black. You can't see anything.

All I knew is there was a chain link fence right next to me. I tried to, again, turn my face, nose, over towards the fence a little bit. It didn't make a difference because within half a minute or so I couldn't breathe. There was blood in my nose, and all that concrete turned to like cement.

I got my hand over my head again. I can't even believe this is happening. This is the second. What is going on? I can't believe they didn't shoot the plane. I thought it was a plane. Why didn't they fucking shoot this plane out of the air.

I put my hand over my head. Again, I think it's all over. Let it be merciful a second time. I said this is unbelievable. I could feel things actually flying through the air. I can't hear them. I actually feel like pressure changing. I know there's shit flying through the air. I said something is going to whack me. This is going to be over. I'm laying there.

All of a sudden somebody again behind me -- I could feel them not far from my right foot. I can hear the voice, "I can't breathe. I've got to get up." I said, "Don't get up." First off, it's pitch-black. There's no way you can tell where you're going. Two, I feel these things flying through the air. This guy, "Let me get up," you're going to get fucking killed. I said, "Just stay on the ground, put your face to the ground and try to breathe the best you can."

Don't get up."

A couple minutes or so, I hear the guy saying the same thing. I said, "Don't get up. Just stay down." To me it seems like five minutes. I don't know, in the back of my mind, how long. But it's dark for a long time. It's hard to breathe. You could hardly even breathe.

The next thing you know, you could see off the ground a little bit of light. You see it just starting to lift. Okay. He said something, and I said, "Let it lift a little bit more." Just as it lifted a little bit more, he said, "I'm out of here." I said, "Whoa, whoa, you've got to do me a favor. You've got to help me get up," because I couldn't get up. I couldn't even move at this point.

Whoever it was, he came up -- I remember somebody grabbed the back of the coat, my turnout coat, helped me to my feet. I'm on my feet, and that's it, he finished his commitment. I see this guy gone. I think it's a civilian, only because the only thing I can really see is a guy with civilian clothes and a white shirt running, no turnout gear. He's gone.

I hobble out of there with two of my knees killing me and everything else. I hobble down the street. The first thing I see is I could see Louie Garcia. I could see the chain link fence, the lot on the right, and then there's a building up there.

I see Louis Garcia. I'm talking to him. He said, "Oh, God, Brian, you're alive." He told me to go inside, there's EMS in there. I go inside. It's like a deli or something, some kind of food establishment. EMS guys in there.

I was looking for water. I saw a cooler, and I said, "Give me water." I'm trying to drink it. I had these guys telling me, "Don't swallow it." "No shit, Sherlock, give me the fucking water." I was just trying to drink it, spit it out, drink it, spit it out. I can't breathe through my nose. I'm doing that.

Just then Louis comes back in, and Joe Callan. I remember Chief Callan sat right opposite me. I heard him say, "Oh, Brian, you're alive. Oh, my God, you're alive." I looked at him. He said, "I was with Father Mychal. He was right next to me. He's dead." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

An EMS guy came over because Garcia said something, he looked at a couple of things, he went to touch my arm. I remember him saying, "We've got to get him out of here. I can't treat him." I don't know if he came with me or he got somebody else. Two people walked me around the corner. We were going around this building to the harbor side, and that's where the triage area was.

They did a quick triage. They take me in the lobby. There was a captain or a chief EMS there. I said, "You've got to get this fucking triage -- you've got to move this area. It's too close." I'm thinking if this is another plane they can't -- in my mind now, there's another one coming behind it.

They triaged me. After a while I guess there's nobody coming in. One of the bosses came in and said, "Get all the firemen. Get them." Some man comes over and said they're going to put me in a chair stretcher. By now they had put a sling on my arm, a cravat type sling.

I got another bottle of water from some civilian, because I'm still trying to wash everything out. That was it. They put me in a ambulance.

There was a captain -- they were laying him down. They said, "We have to put more than one person in the ambulance." There aren't many ambulances there. I saw the jump seat. I said I wanted to sit up so I could control and hold my arm. So I went up in the front in the jump seat.

They said, "Chief, can you open your legs up? They put the gurney or the stretcher in, and there was a captain. I remember holding hands, talking. I remember him saying he was covering 22 Engine. I don't remember his name. He was under the bridge when the collapse occurred, and he thinks he's the only guy in his company that survived. I know they were talking about him having broken bones in at least the arm and leg on one side.

They put a couple more civilians in the bus. When the bus door was closing, I remember the guy saying, "Where are we going?" I heard them saying, "All firemen go to Bellevue,

Bellevue." That was it.

Two things I left out earlier, or one thing, I guess. When I'm by Ganci, I can hear -- it's got to be on his radio, because I don't have a handy talky. I hear a guy giving a mayday, "Mayday, mayday, mayday." He identifies. He goes right through the whole procedure.

This is Ladder 4 O.V. identify yourself. Mike Brennan, a young guy I know. I don't think Pete answers him, but whoever answers the mayday, I hear they said, "Where are you?" Ladder 4, they were in the hotel -- I remember him saying that -- and he's trapped.

That's the point I'm leaving and Pete's telling me, "You get going. Head north to the area where the ambulances are."

That's really the only handy talky message I heard other than trying to give maydays earlier. All we had were the visuals.

Q. Yeah, sure.

A. That's it.

Q. With the map, where do you think the hole was?

A. What hole?

Q. That you came out of.

A. Oh.

Q. See where it says the World Trade Center three, Vista Hotel?

A. I don't know if it's the Vista anymore.

Q. No, it's the Vista International Marriott.

A. Marriott.

See where the bend is?

Q. Yeah.

A. It's past that bend, the end of the building.

Q. Right.

A. Maybe 10, 12 feet from the end of the building back towards that. It's on the flat section.

Q. You walked directly across to Two World Financial Center?

A. I probably moved diagonally a little. See where that red line is?

Q. Right.

A. Because, as I said, remember that's where that little bend is. I walked behind 10 Truck. 10 Truck is partially into that, nose in,



because when you come off West, you can pull in.

Q. Right.

A. Bent in. I walked behind them.

Q. So you wound up --

A. Then when I walked behind them, from there, then I go straight across. So on this map I'm probably heading -- yeah, right --

Q. This isn't exactly. The pedestrian bridge on this map is too far north.

A. But I'm walking towards that Two World Financial Center.

Q. Yeah, okay.

A. Because I could see that building. I could see it. I thought I saw ambulances over there. I even thought one of them flipped over.

Q. Okay.

A. There were big pieces of steel laying out in the street long ways. I remember seeing that.

They're not on the sidewalk, but they're right by the sidewalk, because when I leave them I realize the sidewalk is right there.

Q. They're above the sidewalk.

A. What?

Q. They were on that grassy knoll on top of the sidewalk.

A. No, no. They're right by where the sidewalk starts, right in the street.

Q. In the street.

A. Pete and Feehan are way across not too many feet, because I don't realize it when I'm talking to them, but when I leave them I see the sidewalk. It must have been a couple feet.

Oh, when I leave Pete, when I turn, I turn around and I go behind him when we're looking for Ray, to point to him. That's the first time that I now see what happened. Now I see --

Q. Off to your right.

A. I could see the parts of the steel still standing. I could see the steel cut through the hotel. Before I never saw what happened. I didn't know what happened. Now I know the tower came down. To me it looks like 100, 150 feet of steel is sticking up. But there are other pieces I could see where they cut right through the hotel.

In my own mind I think everything -- we

got in that -- we were probably in that area, just that little area where the bend is. From there where that bend is, that's where we are. That's the piece that survived. I think everything south of that is gone; maybe not. But I think everything south of me was completely gone, at that point.

Q. Yeah.

A. I walk across, see them, then walk up. You're right, this is further back.

Q. Right.

A. It bends in under here.

Q. Where the Winter Garden is?

A. Yeah. It bends in under there. When it bends in towards the Winter Garden is where I come in off the curb and then move up.

Q. I know they've got you on videotape over here.

A. Okay.

Q. You were talking to Al.

A. I don't know who I talked to.

Q. I know, I know. We were all in multishock.

A. I don't know who I talked --

Q. They've got you on videotape here on the right on the part I saw, on this corner. Then you're saying you went up this street.

A. Now I go this way, because whoever it is, when I get here and I said there's no ambulances here -- it's not a big, long conversation. It's like, "Where the fuck are the ambulances?"

Q. Exactly.

A. They said, "Two or three blocks north." I said, "No, I can't walk two or three more blocks." So I go here. I bet you I don't get -- 100 feet up here when this thing starts to go. I don't really know.

In my own opinion I thought what happened was one of the things that made me survive the second one was I got far enough that this building shielded this, the corner. I got just far enough up that corner of that building was shielded from debris.

Q. Yeah. Okay.

A. About 100 feet over here. After you see me here, maybe 100 feet from there, that's when I hear that noise. You don't have it marked

here, but there's a building here.

Q. A building there, yeah.

A. This is a lot. There's a chain link fence and a lot.

Q. Right.

A. This is the building. It has a deli here, and the entrance to the building is over here on the side by the harbor. That's where the triage area is.

CHIEF LAKIOTES: Okay. That concludes the interview. It is approximately 1225 hours.

Thank you, Brian.